

# ***NEWS FROM THE FRONT***

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## **Rapid Equipping Force (REF): The Commander's Option to Quickly Address Equipment Gaps**



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Leaders,

Mission analysis during the military decision making process (MDMP) or during the assessment phase of an operation may lead a Commander or staff to identify an equipment capability gap. When there is an equipment (hardware, software, weapon, tool, etc.) capability gap, what solutions does a unit have at its fingertips? The United States Army provides units two means to solve the issue: the time consuming Operational Needs Statement (ONS) and the Rapid Equipping Force (REF) 10-Liner Request for Capability. If the need is urgent, the REF 10-Liner is the way to go.

The purpose of this article is to explain the REF 10-Liner and detail the very easy-to-complete form in order to help the Soldiers and leaders. Its intended audience is deploying units at all levels.

### **REF 10-Line vs ONS**

Established in 2002, the U.S. Army organized the Rapid Equipping Force to accelerate the use of technological innovations to put the United States in an advantageous position worldwide. REF, which reports to the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, is prepared to solve materiel challenges or shortfalls that units or Soldiers experience by producing a solution that will increase Soldiers' safety and reduce overall operational risk. The action that starts the procurement or production process is the submission of a REF 10-Liner Request for Capability, which outlines the challenge/gap. The simple form allows the REF to take procurement actions for urgently needed equipment solutions.<sup>i</sup>

An ONS is a request for materiel to conduct military operations and complete missions. This statement follows a specific format that commanding officers are expected to use when submitting a request. The ONS approval process can be a lengthy one (12 to 18 months). Preparing an ONS requires patience and learning the proper format. Feedback from units returning from contingency operations delivers the same message when it comes to obtaining new or critical equipment - the process of filling out and submitting an ONS takes too long.

The quicker method is the REF 10-Liner. It is apparent that deploying units are unaware of the REF 10-Liner Request for Capability. The REF 10-Liner is for use by units deployed, or preparing to deploy, in order to obtain needed equipment to fulfill a mission.

The REF reviews the request and, within 48 hours, decides if it will validate that requirement. Not all requests are honored. Requests must document a capability gap that when filled enhances mission accomplishment or reduces risk to the Soldier. REF is not a means for Soldiers to obtain a slick piece of kit that they want to have. If validated, the project teams work closely with the requesting unit to analyze the tactical problem and find technologies to mitigate the capability gap. If it is not already in the Army's system, REF looks to see who can develop it or if there is already a COTS item available. In most cases, the REF delivers solutions to the unit in 180 days or less.<sup>ii</sup> The REF searches for solutions from various sources. These sources include commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) and/or government-off-the-shelf (GOTS) products meeting the needed capability. The equipment or products provided by the REF may be a permanent or a temporary fix. The REF solution may be temporary while the ONS may provide a long-term solution.

## The REF 10-Liner

The Army Deputy Chief of Staff gave the REF Director the authority to validate requirements in order to ensure that these quick-reaction solutions get top priority to meet Soldier and unit needs. Any Soldier at any level that is deployed can submit a REF request. Once the 10-Liner is submitted and validated, development begins.<sup>iii</sup>

The REF 10-Liner is actually ten parts, with the first nine subdivided further to provide clarity and fidelity to the gap that the requesting unit (RU) is trying to fix.

The simple document is composed of the following 10 lines:

1. Information on the unit (Unit Identification Code or Deployed Unit Identification Code)
2. Information about the Soldier
3. Statement of the tactical problem that includes a summary of the capability gap, with photos or sketches (see note below)
4. Concept of operation: includes a description of how the unit will use the materiel (see note below)
5. System characteristics: includes a description of what the materiel solution must do.
6. Procurement objective: includes a total of how many the unit needs.
7. Support requirements: includes a description of the type of support the unit will need for this capability.
8. Available solutions: includes whether the unit has identified any available commercial- and government-off-the-shelf technologies.
9. Coordination accomplished includes a description of any previous coordination done to mitigate the challenge.
10. Comments section is for REF use only.<sup>iv</sup>

## Classification

Leaders must understand that although the blank form is unclassified, the information provided, when aggregated, may make the form classified at a higher level of information security.

The form itself contains the header and the footer:

“The unit security manager / classification authority should be the determining source. If classifying at the CONFIDENTIAL or above level, then the appropriate information must also show on the document.”

## Success Stories

Examples of using the REF 10-Liner (without going into classified detail) follow:

1 – A unit requires a simpler breaching method to help platoons breach hardened doors. They complete a REF 10-Liner explaining the requirement and equipment capability gap that needs filling. The REF reviews the form, assesses and validates the need based on the mission(s) performed and that the need is real. The REF researches available solutions and procures based on the need. In this example, a battering ram used by law enforcement agencies is available through a government supply service.

2 – Units conducting special operations have determined the need for an elusive, extremely compact, and very detail oriented unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). The UAV needs to have the ability to operate, undetected, within confined spaces as well. As explained above, the REF searches commercial venues and finds a suitable solution (the UAV selected is depicted on the cover).

With both vignettes listed above, an ONS may be a follow-up solution to provide a fielding to the Army as a whole or for follow-on units performing the same mission.

### **Summary**

The Army's intent is to provide Soldiers and units with the best available equipment to accomplish the mission as quickly as possible. These materiel solutions could be readily available in the Army inventory, or commercial solutions. The REF 10-Liner equipment request gets needed equipment into the hands of the Soldiers and units much quicker than the ONS.

For more information about the REF, and how to get a downloadable REF 10-liner, visit [www.ref.army.mil](http://www.ref.army.mil).

You can also contact the REF at either:

NIPR e-mail: [usarmy.belvoir.tradoc.mbx.ref-ops-center@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.belvoir.tradoc.mbx.ref-ops-center@mail.mil)

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<sup>i</sup> NCO Journal; <http://ncojournal.dodlive.mil/ref-10-liner-offers-pathway-to-materiel-solution/>

<sup>ii</sup> TRADOC News Center; <https://tradocnews.org/the-rapid-equipping-force/> , 28 January 2015

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid TRADOC News Center

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid TRADOC News Center